

ON CREATING A JUST PARDON BOARD FOR WISCONSIN CITIZENS

For the past eight years, the Wisconsin Governor granted no pardons, and he refused to even set up a pardon board to review and consider pardon recommendations. I believe that it was and is the Wisconsin Governor's duty to consider pardons for worthy individuals, since the governor is the only one who can provide this necessary adjunct to the criminal justice system. *

The backlog that was created by Governor Walker will make the task more difficult, but it needs to happen. Putting aside Governor Walker's decision to refuse to consider pardons for anyone convicted of a state criminal offense, it is my fervent hope that the following will happen under Governor Evers:

- (1) That he will take a humanitarian approach and create a pardon board for Wisconsin;
- (2) That the pardon board will be non-partisan, with bi-partisan members, and with strict rules to screen applicants in order to ensure that only those who are worthy of receiving a pardon will be recommended for a pardon;
- (3) That the pardon board will not be swayed in any way by "connections," financial, political, or otherwise; and
- (4) That anyone seeking a pardon will be able to apply for a pardon without needing an attorney to advocate on their behalf. (Volunteers, Wisconsin law schools, and/or the pardon board should be able to assist those who are unable to provide the necessary information to the board due to educational or other personal constraints.)

Perhaps these are pie-in-the-sky expectations. I hope not.

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Wisconsin Constitution Article V.

Pardoning power. Section 6. The governor shall have power to grant reprieves, commutations and pardons, after conviction, for all offenses, except treason and cases of impeachment, upon such conditions and with such restrictions and limitations as he may think proper, subject to such regulations as may be provided by law relative to the manner of applying for pardons. Upon conviction for treason he shall have the power to suspend the execution of the sentence until the case shall be reported to the legislature at its next meeting, when the legislature shall either pardon, or commute the sentence, direct the execution of the sentence, or grant a further reprieve. He shall annually communicate to the legislature each case of reprieve, commutation or pardon granted, stating the name of the convict, the crime of which he was convicted, the sentence and its date, and the date of the commutation, pardon or reprieve, with his reasons for granting the same.